

## **CMDR COE INTERNSHIP PROGRAMME POLICY**

- REFERENCES:
- A. CMDR COE Steering Committee Decision 3/2016
  - B. CMDR COE Steering Committee Decision 11/2020
  - C. CMDR COE Steering Committee Decision 12/2025
  - D. SOP 106 Annex A: In-processing Form
  - E. SOP 106 Annex B Out:-processing Form
  - F. SOP 502 - Event Support Request Form

**1. Status.** This Policy supersedes the CMDR COE Internship Programme Policy dated 17 February 2025, which shall be considered void and destroyed.

**2. Purpose.** The purpose of this Policy is to establish the overarching framework governing the CMDR COE Internship Programme, including its objectives, guiding principles, eligibility conditions, and institutional responsibilities. The Policy ensures transparency, fairness, and equal opportunity for all eligible applicants.

**3. Scope and Applicability.** This Policy applies to all CMDR COE personnel involved in the planning, management, and supervision of internships, as well as for all applicants and interns participating in the CMDR COE Internship Programme. Compliance with this Policy is mandatory.

**4. Implementation through Standard Operating Procedure.** This Policy is implemented and operationalised through the Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) – CMDR COE Internship Programme, which constitutes an integral and authoritative instrument governing the detailed execution of the Internship Programme.

The SOP translates the principles, objectives, and requirements of this Policy into concrete procedures, roles, timelines, and administrative processes, ensuring consistency, transparency, and compliance across all phases of the Internship Programme.

All CMDR COE personnel involved in the planning, selection, administration, supervision, and evaluation of internships shall comply with the provisions of the SOP. In the event of discrepancies, this Policy prevails, while the SOP provides binding procedural guidance within the scope of this Policy.

The SOP is recognised as essential for the effective, accountable, and standardised implementation of the CMDR COE Internship Programme and supports the Centre's commitment to good governance, quality assurance, and institutional continuity.

## **5. Overview**

The Crisis Management and Disaster Response Centre of Excellence (CMDR COE) is committed to fostering an inclusive, innovative, and capable approach to global and regional crisis management and disaster response. Young professionals play a critical role in

achieving these objectives, bringing energy, expertise, and determination that strengthen collaborative efforts to promote peace, security, and effective crisis response.

Anticipating and addressing future challenges requires preparing today for tomorrow's operational and strategic needs. Central to this preparation is leveraging the talent and potential of young professionals by providing them with meaningful opportunities for personal and professional development, while simultaneously benefiting from their skills, perspectives, and innovative contributions.

The CMDR COE Internship Programme serves as a structured platform to achieve this dual objective. It allows interns to engage directly with the Centre's activities, gain exposure to multinational and interdisciplinary crisis management initiatives, and contribute to projects aligned with the CMDR COE's mandate.

Through this programme, the CMDR COE not only invests in the next generation of crisis management professionals but also enhances its operational capacity and strengthens the collective capability of the international crisis response community.

## **6. General Principles**

### **a. Professional Development and Engagement**

The Internship Programme is designed to provide young professionals with opportunities for personal and professional growth, exposure to international crisis management operations, and practical experience in a multidisciplinary environment. Interns contribute to ongoing CMDR COE activities and projects, thereby supporting the Centre's objectives while developing their own skills and competencies.

### **b. Inclusivity and Equal Opportunity**

CMDR COE is committed to fostering an inclusive environment and ensuring equal opportunity, without discrimination based on gender, nationality (within NATO and Partners' countries), religion or professional background. All interns are selected based on merit, skills, and potential contribution to the Centre's mission.

### **c. Non-Employment Status**

Participation in the Internship Programme does not constitute employment. Interns are not CMDR COE staff members and do not acquire associated privileges, immunities, or employment rights. All internships are governed by a formal Internship Agreement that defines roles, responsibilities, and terms of engagement.

### **d. Paid and Unpaid Internships**

Subject to available resources, the CMDR COE offers up to four (4) paid internships per year, normally distributed across two annual intakes. These positions are intended to support active participation in CMDR COE activities and provide financial assistance for selected interns. Additional non-paid or spontaneous internships may also be considered based on operational needs and resource availability. If the financial resources of the Centre allow, non-paid or spontaneous internships may exceptionally be converted into paid or partially paid internships, subject to a reasoned recommendation by the Selection Committee and the approval of the CMDR COE Director.

## **7. Definitions**

For the purpose of this Policy

a. **Internship Programme** - a structured, time-bound learning engagement with defined objectives, supervision, and evaluation, governed by this Policy and an

## Internship Agreement.

- b. **Internship Agreement** - a formal written document concluded between the CMDR COE and an accepted intern, defining the terms and conditions of the internship. It establishes the mutual rights and responsibilities of both parties, including the duration of the internship, assigned tasks and responsibilities, work location, supervision arrangements, financial provisions (if applicable), and any applicable rules on confidentiality, data protection, and conduct.
- c. **Selection Committee** - a formally constituted body authorized by CMDR COE to oversee, evaluate, and recommend candidates for admission into the Internship Programme. The Committee evaluates applications, conducts assessments and interviews, manages conflicts of interest, and recommends candidates for final approval in accordance with approved criteria, policies, and applicable regulations.
- d. **Mentor** – a CMDR COE employee assigned to guide, oversee, and evaluate the intern.
- e. **Intern** – a selected applicant participating in the Internship Programme.
- f. **Programme Coordinator** – the designated CMDR COE staff member within the Program & Students Section (Education & Training Branch) responsible for the overall administration, coordination, and management of the Internship Programme. This includes overseeing the application and selection processes, liaising with interns and mentors, maintaining records, ensuring compliance with policy and procedural requirements, and providing guidance to both interns and CMDR COE staff on programme-related matters. The Programme Coordinator serves as the primary point of contact for all operational aspects of the Internship Programme.

## 8. Programme Objectives

The CMDR COE Internship Programme aims to deliver value to both interns and CMDR COE. The objectives include:

### 8.1. Objectives for interns:

- a. Provide meaningful, hands-on professional experience.
- b. Develop technical, research and professional competencies.
- c. Enhance employability through exposure to real-world projects and professional mentorship.
- d. Develop ethical awareness, collaborative skills, and professional behaviour in line with CMDR COE values and standards.

### 8.2. Objectives for CMDR COE

- a. Support research, innovation, and operational activities aligned with CMDR COE priorities, ongoing projects, and the approved Programme of Work (POW), through supervised intern contributions.
- b. Identify, nurture, and engage talented individuals whose skills and interests align with the CMDR COE's mission.
- c. Strengthen partnerships with academic institutions and training providers.

- d. Enhance CMDR COE's institutional reputation as a centre of excellence and talent developer.
- e. Promote knowledge transfer, fresh perspectives, and innovation within CMDR COE teams.
- f. Optimize workforce planning by supplementing projects with structured internship support.

**9. Guiding Principles.** The Internship Programme is governed by the following principles:

- a. Merit-based selection and transparency;
- b. Equal opportunity and non-discrimination;
- c. Educational value and professional integrity;
- d. Non-employment status of interns;
- e. Compliance with NATO and CMDR COE regulations, including security and confidentiality.

**10. Types of Internships.** Subject to resources and operational needs, CMDR COE may offer:

- a. **Paid internship** - an internship position offered by the CMDR COE for which the selected intern receives a monetary stipend in recognition of their participation and contribution to the Centre's activities. Paid internships are subject to available resources, governed by an Internship Agreement, and are distinct from employment; they do not confer staff status, associated privileges, or benefits.
- b. **Unpaid internship** - an internship position offered by the CMDR COE for which the selected intern does not receive a monetary stipend. These internships provide the same opportunities for professional development, project participation, and learning as paid internships, but are offered without financial support. Unpaid internships are governed by an Internship Agreement and do not constitute employment, nor do they confer staff status or associated privileges.

**11. Types of applications**

- a. **Regular application** - an application submitted by a candidate in response to an officially announced CMDR COE internship call. Such applications are paid, in accordance with the conditions specified in the respective call for applications. Candidates must meet the eligibility criteria outlined in the call and submit all required documentation within the established deadline. All regular applications are evaluated by the CMDR COE Selection Committee based on merit, relevance of qualifications, and the Centre's operational needs. Final acceptance is subject to the identification and approval of a suitable mentor and the availability of the Centre's operational resources. Financial arrangements, where applicable, are governed by the provisions specified in the respective internship call and relevant CMDR COE regulations.
- b. **Spontaneous application** - an application submitted by a candidate outside the scheduled calls for CMDR COE internships. Such applications shall be considered **unpaid by default** and must clearly specify the proposed research topic or area of contribution. Eligibility and the Centre's capacity to host the candidate are assessed by the CMDR COE Selection Committee on a case-by-case basis. Acceptance of

a spontaneous application requires the prior approval of a suitable mentor and the availability of the Centre's operational resources. Any exception regarding financial support is subject to the provisions governing paid internships.

- c. **Re-application** - an intern who has demonstrated significant value to CMDR COE activities and wishes to apply for a subsequent intake may do so, subject to the availability of an open internship position. Such applications shall be treated as spontaneous applications and assessed in accordance with the standard selection procedures. In such cases, the established eligibility criteria have to be fully applicable. The re-application is limited to only one additional term.

The availability of stipends is subject to Internship Selection Committee decisions and Director approval.

## 12. Eligibility and restrictions

### a. Eligibility Criteria

CMDR COE is looking for candidates from a wide variety of disciplines including: Political Science, International relations, Security Studies, Law, Information Technology, Journalism and Media Communications etc.

To qualify for an internship at the CMDR COE, all of the criteria outlined below must be fulfilled as of the date of application:

- 1/ **Age:** over 21 years of age and up to 35 (as of the date of the beginning of the Internship);
- 2/ **Nationality:** Applicants must be citizens of NATO member states or NATO partner nations, as listed on NATO's official partnerships page (<https://www.nato.int/en/what-we-do/partnerships-and-cooperation/natos-partnerships#heading-0>). Exceptions may be granted on a case-by-case basis, subject to the approval of the CMDR COE Director.
- 3/ **Education:**
  - a) Enrolled in a graduate school programme (Master's or PhD), or;
  - b) Enrolled in the last academic year of an undergraduate programme (Bachelor's level or equivalent), or;
  - c) A recent (no more than a year ago) graduate from an undergraduate or graduate programme;
  - d) For certain internship calls applicants may be required to have a degree in a specific field and at a specific level, or extended years of studies.
- 4/ **Languages:** Proficiency in the CMDR COE's working language - English, is required. The accepted level of proficiency is either ENGLISH STANAG 3-3-3-3 or a civilian equivalent in accordance with the NATO International Staff language level equivalences (upper intermediate). Applicants have to provide a certificate for the level of English proficiency. No certificate is required for English native speakers.
- 5/ Satisfy legal, background, and security requirements, if required.
- 6/ Applicants' education, training, qualifications, demonstrated knowledge, and competencies shall match the requirements of the research topic for which they apply. The topic requirements and intended research end state shall be defined by the designated mentor.

## b. Restrictions

An applicant shall not be eligible for selection under the following circumstances:

- 1/ The applicant is a first degree relative of a CMDR COE staff member;
- 2/ The applicant has a criminal record (excluding minor traffic violations);
- 3/ *Applicants shall be required to submit a formal declaration confirming the absence of any history of drug or alcohol abuse, harassment, or other serious misconduct. Failure to submit such a declaration, or the submission of false information, shall render the applicant ineligible.*

Applicants shall be required to formally declare the absence of any of the above affiliation or conditions as part of their application.

## 13. Security

CMDR COE interns adhere to the CMDR COE security regulations. Upon arrival, they are briefed for that by CMDR COE security officer and sign a Letter of acknowledgement.

## 14. Duration of Internship

- a. The standard duration of the CMDR COE's paid internship should be within is **5 (five) months**.
- b. Subject to project or assignment requirements, and upon approval by the CMDR COE Director, based on a duly justified proposal from the assigned Internship Mentor, the internship duration may be adjusted to a maximum of **ten (10) months**. Any extension beyond the standard five (5) months **shall be unpaid**, unless the approved budgetary resources of the Centre explicitly allow for continued or partial stipend support and such support is expressly authorised by the CMDR COE Director.

Any deviation from the standard duration shall be formally documented through an annex to the original internship agreement.

## 15. Work Venue, Working Hours and Security Conditions

- a. Work Venue. Interns are generally required to be present at the CMDR COE premises: Blvd. Totleben 34A, Sofia, Bulgaria, for the duration of their internship.
  - 1/ temporary remote work arrangements may be permitted on a case-by-case basis, subject to approval by the CMDR COE DIR;
  - 2/ any exceptions to on-site attendance must be explicitly documented in the relevant **Internship Agreement**;
  - 3/ The intern should share the same office as her/his Mentor, if it is possible;
  - 4/ The administrative area to be assigned only on the first or third floors
  - 5/ While on CMDR COE premises or representing the Centre in an official capacity, interns shall adhere to a professional dress code consistent with the standards applicable to CMDR COE personnel. The dress code shall reflect the formal and institutional nature of the Centre, taking into account the specific work environment, official meetings, events, or external engagements, as well as guidance provided by the assigned mentor or hosting Branch.
- b. Working Hours: Intern working hours align with the official working hours of CMDR COE staff members, unless something else is explicitly mentioned in the

## Internship Agreement.

### c. Security Conditions

- 1/ Interns work in an office in the administrative area of the center, mainly on the 3rd floor. Access to their workplace is via a security badge. They receive this badge immediately after the security briefing conducted by the security officer.
- 2/ To access the security area, floor 2, they must be escorted by their mentor or the center staff member with whom they will work in the security area.
- 3/ They only have access to NATO non-classified information (both NATO UNCLASSIFIED and public). Access is based on their need-to-know and is related to their training at the center. They can work with a service computer from the center's unclassified information network, without access to the SharePoint portal.
- 4/ If, due to the subject of their work, they need access to NATO classified information with a level NATO RESTRICTED, they can obtain it from their mentor and can work with it in the presence of the mentor.
- 5/ For the access to classified information with levels NATO CONFIDENTIAL and SECRET, they have to present NATO Personal Security Clearance (Confirmation), issued by their respective national authorities.
- 6/ Interns do not have access to NS WAN in the centre.

## 16. Employment Relationship Disclaimer

### Interns:

- a. Are not CMDR COE staff members and shall not be used as substitutes for staff;
- b. Do not receive any privileges or immunities arising from NATO Status of Forces Agreements (SOFAs) or the Paris Protocol;
- c. Do not represent CMDR COE in any official capacity, unless explicitly authorized in writing by the CMDR COE Director.

While the internship does not imply employment, it may lead to future collaboration opportunities on specific initiatives, subject to separate arrangements.

## 17. Legal and administrative requirements

- a. Interns are responsible for completing all administrative formalities required by Bulgarian authorities, including legal residence, work authorization, and visas. CMDR COE will provide guidance and a letter certifying selection for the Internship Programme to support these procedures.
- b. Interns are responsible for all costs related to travel, insurance, and accommodation.

## 18. Insurance and liability

- a. Interns must have valid medical insurance coverage for the entire internship period.
- b. CMDR COE is not responsible for any accidents, losses, illnesses, or other misfortunes affecting interns during the internship, and does not cover medical or other personal expenses.

## 19. Data Protection and Privacy

Upon submission of an application, candidates will be required to review and formally acknowledge the CMDR COE Data Protection and Privacy Policy and to consent to the

processing of their personal data in accordance with the terms and definitions set out therein.

## **20. Leave and Absence and Termination**

### **a. Ordinary leave**

Interns are subject to the same working hours and official public holidays as CMDR COE staff. After completing one month of the internship, interns are entitled to two (2) days of leave per month served. Leave must be requested at least one week in advance and authorized by the direct mentor.

### **b. Sick leave**

- 1/ In case of illness, the intern must inform the mentor immediately. Interns may continue their internship remotely (home office) during periods of temporary illness or other major necessity, while remaining eligible for the full stipend.
- 2/ If the intern is absent for more than three (3) consecutive days, he/she must email a copy of the medical certificate to the mentor.
- 3/ If health conditions prevent the intern from fulfilling internship responsibilities (including remote work), and upon recommendation of the mentor, one of the following may apply:

### **c. Unauthorized absence**

- 1/ Unauthorized absences may lead to the immediate termination of the internship and may preclude the issuance of the internship certificate and recommendation.
- 2/ Internship mentors are responsible for monitoring, recording and reporting intern attendance to relevant stakeholders.
- 3/ Unauthorized absence or misconduct may result in suspension or termination. The CMDR COE Director holds final authority.

## **21. Suspension, termination and rescheduling**

- a. Suspension:** The internship may be suspended until the intern can resume. The stipend shall be pro-rated based on time served prior to suspension.
- b. Termination or rescheduling:** The internship may be terminated or rescheduled, with the stipend pro-rated accordingly.

## **22. Intellectual property and Confidentiality**

All work products, materials, data, and outputs produced during the internship, whether individually or collaboratively, are subject to the intellectual property, confidentiality, and information-handling rules of the CMDR COE and, where applicable, relevant external regulations. Any use, disclosure, or publication of such materials by the intern beyond the scope of the internship requires the prior written authorisation of the CMDR COE.

## **23. Appeals and Complaints**

The *CMDR COE Policy on discrimination and harassment in the workplace* applies to the interns.

**24. Governance and Oversight.** The CMDR COE Director holds overall authority over the Internship Programme. Selection and implementation are supported by a formally appointed Selection Committee and designated Programme Coordinator. The roles and responsibilities of the governance structure are defined in the relevant SOP.

**25. Review and Amendments.** This Policy may be amended upon recommendation of the Director or Selection Committee Chairperson and enters into force upon Director approval.

**26. Proponent.** The proponent for this SOP is the Education and Training Branch Chief, with whom all updates and revision proposals should be coordinated.

CMDR COE DIRECTOR

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